

THE SAD PLIGHT AND SURE RELIEF NO. 1184

*A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.*

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."
Romans 5:6.

As I was sitting, the other day, with an aged believer who is a local preacher among our Wesleyan friends, he said to me, "I cannot hope, in the course of nature, to stand up in the pulpit many more times. Therefore, every time I preach now, I preach of nothing but Jesus Christ; and I said to the people the other day, 'You will say when I am dead and gone, Poor old Mr. So-and-So will come and preach to us no more; but as he got older and older the more he preached about Jesus Christ, till for the last few months of his life the old man never spoke about anything but his Master.'" Then, as if confidentially addressing himself to me, he said, "I should like to leave just that impression upon the people's minds when I am taken from them." The resolution seems to me so good that I think that it might be taken up by us who are younger and adopted as our own! Paul, before he was, "Paul the Aged," said, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." There is nothing like striking at the center, and keeping to vital points; and if we are keeping to Christ crucified, we are keeping to that which will save souls, which will build up believers, and which will glorify God! But, dear friends, if we might be allowed to go astray from this subject sometimes, yet certainly not on an evening like this, when we are about to gather around the Lord's Table which is loaded with the memorials of our Redeemer's passion. Tonight, you who are believers in Jesus ought to have no eyes for any object but Him, no ear for any sound but that which tells of Him; indeed, no hearts with which to relish any theme save your crucified Lord! Blind, deaf, dead to every worldly consideration; let us be just now, all alive, all awake, and all aglow with love to Him, and the desire to have true fellowship with Him!

Our text brings us at once to the cross, and it sheds a light upon our former estate. Let us see where we were, and what was needed to make us the children of God. Do you ask, "How did our Redeemer view us when He died for us?" The response is here clearly given, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Thus we have a two-fold description of the state in which Christ viewed mankind when He shed the blood of redemption. Those, for whom His propitiation was offered, were "without strength," and they were "ungodly." If you or I have any part or lot in the matchless death of Jesus, we must feel ourselves to have been in just this condition, for it cannot have any relation to any persons but those who, by nature, are "without strength," and "ungodly."

I. THAT EACH MAN FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED WAS WITHOUT STRENGTH IS OBVIOUS. He was *legally weak*. Before God's bar he had a weak case, a case without strength; he stood up as a prisoner to be tried, and of all the cases that were ever brought into court, his was the most destitute of power. He was without strength. To make the case our own, as it really *is* ours, we could not deny the charge that we had broken the law; we could not set up an *alibi*, nor could we put in a plea of extenuation. The fact was clear. Our own conscience vouched for it, as well as the record of God's providence; we could not make apologies, for we sinned willfully, sinned against His light and against knowledge, sinned repeatedly, sinned without any necessity, and sinned with an extravagant willfulness. We sinned with many different aggravations; we sinned after we knew sin to be exceedingly sinful before God, and extremely injurious to ourselves. Yes, we sinned deliberately and presumptuously when we knew the penalty—when we understood what we would lose for lack of obedience, and what we should incur as the chastisement of transgression. I say again, man's case is well described as being extremely weak.

Looked at legally, it is utterly without strength. No advocate who understood the case would have ventured to plead it, except that one glorious advocate who *did* plead it, but at the cost of His own life! He knew that if He undertook it, and stood up to plead with God for us, He must die for it, for it was a case in which, before the law, we were without strength. We had no good works to be a setoff for our sin; we had no hope of ever performing any in the future which could ever stand in the place of the good works which ought to have been done in the past. The case, put however it might be, broke down utterly—and the prisoner himself, if, indeed, able to speak the truth, would be compelled to say—

*"Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must confess You just in death.
And if my soul is sent to hell,
Your righteous law approves it well."*

We were without strength. It was a bad case, altogether, and could not be defended; and man, by nature, is morally weak. We are so weak by nature, that we are carried about like dust, and driven to and fro by every wind that blows; we are swayed by every influence which assails us. man is under the dominion of his own lusts—his pride, his sloth, his love of ease, his love of pleasure; man is such a fool that he will buy pleasure at the most ruinous price; he will fling his soul away as if it were some paltry toy, and barter his eternal interests as if they were but trash! For some petty pleasure of an hour he will risk the health of his body; for some paltry gain, he will jeopardize his soul. Alas! Alas! Poor man, you are as light as the thistledown which goes this way or that, as the wind may turn! In your moral constitution you are as the weathervane which shifts with every breeze!

At one time man is driven by the world—the fashions of the age prevail over him, and he foolishly follows them; at another time a clique of small people, notables in their little way, is in the ascendant, and he is afraid of his fellow men. Threats awe him, though they may be but the frowns of his insignificant neighbors! Or he is bribed by the love of approbation which may possibly mean no more than the nod of the squire, or merely the recognition of an equal, so he sacrifices principle, and runs with the multitude to do evil! Then the evil spirit comes upon him, and the devil tempts him, and away he goes! There is nothing which the devil can suggest to which man will not yield while he is a stranger to divine grace; and if the devil should let him alone, his own *heart* suffices. The pomp of this world, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—any of these things will drive men about at random! Look at them rushing to murder one another with shouts of joy! Look at them returning blood-red from the battlefield! Listen to the acclamations with which they are greeted because they have killed their fellow men! Look at how they will go where poison is served to them; they will drink it till their brain reels, and they fall upon the ground intoxicated and helpless! This is pleasure which they eagerly pursue, and having yielded themselves up to it once, they will repeat it over and over till the folly of an evil hour becomes the habit of an abandoned life! Nothing seems to be too foolish, nothing too wicked, nothing too insane for mankind! Man is morally weak—a poor, crazy child; he has lost that strong hand of a well-trained perfect reason which God gave him at the first; his understanding is blinded, and his foolish heart is darkened. And so Christ finds him, when He comes to save him, morally without strength!

Now, I know I have described exactly the condition of some here. They are emphatically without strength; they know how quickly they yield. It is only to put sufficient pressure upon them, and they give way despite their resolutions, for their strongest resolves are as weak as reeds; and when but a little trial has come, away they go back to the sins which in their conscience they condemn; though nevertheless they continue to practice them! Here is man's state, then—legally condemned, and morally weak! But, further, man is, above all things, *spiritually without* strength! When Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, he incurred the penalty of death, and we are all involved in that penalty. Not that he at once died naturally, but he died *spiritually!* The blessed Spirit left him; he became a *natural* man. And such are we; we have lost the very being of the Spirit by nature; if He comes to us, there is good need He should, for He is not here in us by *nature*. We are not made partakers of the Spirit at our natural birth; this is a *gift* from above to man. We have lost it, and *the spirit*, that vital element which the Holy Spirit implants in us at regeneration.

ation is not present in man by his original generation. He has no spiritual faculties, he cannot hear the voice of God, and he cannot taste the sweets of holiness. He is dead, yes, and in Scripture he is described as lying like the dry bones that have been parched by the hot winds, and are strewn in the valley, dry, utterly dry.

Man is dead in sin. He cannot rise to God any more than the dead in the grave can come out of their sepulchers by themselves and live. He is without strength—utterly so! It is a terrible case, but this is what the text says, “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Putting all these things into one, man, by nature, where Christ finds him, is utterly devoid of strength of every sort for anything that is good—at least anything which is good in God’s sight—and acceptable unto God! It is of no use for him to sit down and say, “I believe I can force my way into purity.” Man, you are without strength till God gives you strength! Man may sometimes start up in a kind of alarm, and say, “It shall be done,” but he falls back again, like the madman who, after an attack of delirium, sinks, again, to his old state. It will *not* be done! “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?” If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well! But not till, by his own unaided strength, can he perform any right and noble purpose!

Now, what am I talking about? Man has no strength of his own at all! He is without strength, and there he lies: hopeless, helpless, ruined and undone, utterly destroyed; a splendid palace all in ruins, through whose broken walls sweep desolate winds with fearful wailings. Man is like a place where beasts of evil names, and birds of foulest wings do haunt; a palace majestic even in ruins, but still utterly ruined, and quite incapable of self-restoration! Man is “without strength.” Alas! Alas! Poor humanity! The persons for whom Christ died are viewed by Him from the cross as being “ungodly,” that is to say, men without God! “God is not in their thoughts.” They can live for the month together, and no more remember Him than if there were no God! God is not in their hearts! If they do remember Him, they do not love Him; God is scarcely in their fears; they can take His name in vain, profane His Sabbaths, and use His name for blasphemy! God is not in their hopes; they do not long to know Him, or to be with Him, or to be like He is. Practically, unconverted men have said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?” If they do not say it in so many words, they imply it by a daily neglect of Him. Even if they take up with religion, yet the natural man sticks to the sentiments or the ritual that belong to his profession; subscribing to a creed, or observing a series of customs, he remains utterly oblivious of that communion with God which all true religion leads us to seek—and therefore he never gets to God. He adapts himself to the outward form, but he does not discern the Spirit; he listens to pious words, but he does not feel them; he joins in holy hymns, but his heart does not sing; he even gets down on his knees and pretends to pray, but all the while his heart is wandering far from God! He does not commune with his Maker, and he *cannot*, for he is alienated from his Creator, or, as the text puts it, he is *ungodly*.

“Now,” you say, “you have made man out to be a strange creature!” Believe me, I have not painted the picture one-half as black as it is, nor can I. But do not be angry with me for so painting it; so much the better for you, for now you see there is no man too bad to be included in this description—without strength and ungodly; but for such as these did Christ die! The description of the men for whom Christ died has not one letter of goodness in it. It describes them as hopelessly, helplessly bad; yet for such Christ died! O sirs, I am not going to tell you that Christ died for saints! He died for *sinners*, not for the godly, but for the *ungodly*! He did not die for the strong in divine grace, strong in morals and the like, but for those who were without strength! Truly I know He died for the saints, but who made them saints? When He died for them they were sinners! I know He died for those whom He has made “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,” but who made them strong? When He died for them they were as weak as others! All the difference between Peter in heaven and Judas in hell is a difference made by free, rich, sovereign grace! There was the same raw material to begin with in one as in another, and Jesus Christ looked upon men, not at their best, when He laid down His life for their redemption, but at their worst! This is clear, yes, it is self-evident—had they been whole, they would not have needed a physician; if they had not been lost they would not have needed a savior!

If the disease had not been very bad, they would not have needed so matchless a medicine as the blood of Christ; if they had not been helplessly lost, there could have been no necessity for omnipotence to step in to perform their rescue! And had not the ruin been terrible to the last degree, it would not have been demanded that God, Himself, should come in human flesh and make expiation for guilt by His own death upon the cross! The glory of the remedy proves the desperateness of the disease; the grandeur of the savior is a sure evidence of the terribleness of our lost condition! Look at it, then, and as man sinks, Christ will rise in your esteem; and as you value the savior, so you will be more and more stricken with terror because of the greatness of the sin which needed such a savior to redeem us from it! Thus I have described the way in which Christ viewed us when He died for us. I only wish the Spirit of God would give to poor trembling sinners the comfort which this doctrine ought to give. You will say, "Oh, I am one of the worst in the world." Christ died for the worst in the world! "Oh, but I have no power to be better." Christ died for those that were without strength! "Oh, but my case condemns itself." Christ died for those that legally are condemned! "Yes, but my case is hopeless." Christ died for the hopeless! He is the hope of the hopeless! He is the savior, not of those partly lost, but of the wholly lost! Your case, however bad as it may be, must come within the sweep of the glorious arm which wields the pierced hands! Christ came to save the very vilest of the vile!

II. But now, secondly, the text tells us WHEN CHRIST INTERPOSED TO SAVE US. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." What does it mean by, "due time"? Why, it means that the death of Christ occurred at a proper period! I cannot suggest any other period in time which would have been so judiciously chosen for the death of the Redeemer as the one which God elected. Nor can I imagine any place more suitable than Calvary, outside the gates of Jerusalem. There was no accident about it. It was all fixed in the eternal purpose, and for infinitely wise reasons. We do not know all the reasons, and must not pretend to know them, but we do know this, that at the time our savior died, sin among mankind in general had reached a climax; there was never a more debauched age! It is impossible to read the 1st chapter of the epistle to the Romans, and to understand its testimony, without feeling sick at the depravity it records. It is such a desperate and altogether truthful description of the infamous vices into which men had fallen in those days that we feel that they must have gone, in fact, beyond all that we could suppose that the vilest imagination could have fabled! Indeed, so far as our modern time is concerned, the annals of crime are silent as to such atrocities! And for the most of us, it surpasses our belief that licentiousness should ever have grown so extravagant in committing willful violations of nature, and indulging a propensity to revel in loathsome folly and unnecessary vice.

Their satirists of their day said that there was no new vice that could be invented. Any person who has passed through Naples by Herculaneum and Pompeii, and seen the memorials of the state of society in which those cities existed, will almost rue the day in which he ever saw what he did—for there is no morgue that is so foul as was the common life of the Romans of that age! And, in all probability, the Romans were as good as any other nation then existing upon earth; their very virtue was but painted vice! What little of virtue had existed among mankind before was gone; Socrates and Solon, so much vaunted everywhere, were in the habit of practicing vices which I dare not mention in any modest assembly. The very leaders of society would have done, openly, things which we should now be committed to prison for mentioning—which it is not lawful *to think!* Society was rotten through and through; it was a stench, and offensive to the utmost by its corruption. But it was then, when man had got to his worst, that on the bloody tree, Christ was lifted up to be a standard of virtue—to be a bronze serpent for the cure of the multitudes of mankind who everywhere were dying of the serpent bites! Christ came at a time when the wisdom of man had got to a great height, and whenever it does get to a great height, man becomes an extraordinary fool! The various masters of philosophy were then going up and down the earth seeking to dazzle men with the brightness of their teaching, but their science was absurdity, and their morals were a systematized immorality! Putting the whole of it together, whatever was true in what they taught, our most common Sunday school child understands, but the bulk of it was altogether fool-

ishness, couched in paradoxical terms to make it look like wisdom. “The world by wisdom knew not God.”

But, surely, man had a religion at that time! He had, but *man's* religion—well, the less we say about the religion which existed when Christ came into the world the better! One of their own poets, speaking of the Egyptians, ridiculed them by saying, “O happy people, who grow your gods in your own kitchen garden!”—for they worshipped leeks and onions! These well-trained and tutored people embalmed birds and cats, and made these objects of religious reverence! If you had stepped into the temple of Isis anywhere, you would soon have discovered emblems of the utmost obscenity; and the holy rites of the common religion of the period—the *holy* rites, I say—done in honor of God were acts of flagrant sin! The temples were abominable, and the priests were abominable beyond description; and where the best part of man, his very religion, had become so foul, what could we expect of his ordinary life? To give a boy a Lempriere’s dictionary, as schoolmasters do, is, I believe, to debauch that boy’s mind, though the most of its execrable records concern the religion of the period of which I am now speaking. If such were the religion of the time, O God, what must its *irreligion* have been? But was there not a true religion in the world, somewhere? Yes, there was, and it was in Judea. But those who inherited the canon of divine revelation, what manner of men were they? Not one bit better than the heathen, for they were gross hypocrites! Tradition had made void the law of God! Ritualism had taken the place of spiritual worship! The Pharisee stood with uplifted eyes and thanked God that he was not as other men were—when he had in his pocket the deeds of a widow’s estate of which he had robbed her!

The Sadducee came forth and vaunted his superior light and intelligence, while at the same time he betrayed his gross darkness and his dire skepticism, for he said that there was no angel, or resurrection, or spirit! The best men of the period in Christ’s days said to Him, because He was holy, “Away with such a fellow from the earth!” I have heard men tell of king killers, as if they were strange beings. But, O earth, you are a regicide! No, you are worse than that, you are a deicide, for did you not put the Son at God, to death? A certain flowery orator once said, “O virtue, you are so fair and lovely, that if you were to come on earth, all men would adore you.” But Virtue *did* come on the earth, clothed not in helmet and in royal cape, nor with iron hand to crush the sons of men, but He came in the silken garments of love and peace, personified by the incarnate savior! And what said the world to Virtue? They said, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” And the only answer the world could give to the question, “Why, what evil has He done?” was, “crucify Him! Crucify Him!” They would not have Him live upon the face of the earth! Now, it was when men had got to this pitch, in due time, that Christ came to die for them. If He had sat up in heaven and launched His thunderbolts at them; if, from the heights of glory, He had commissioned His mailed seraphim and sworded cherubim to come and sweep the whole race away—and bid the bottomless pit open wide her jaws, and swallow up these disgusting creatures, none would have blamed Him. They deserved it! But, instead of that, the pure and Holy One comes down to earth, Himself, to suffer, and to bleed, and die, that these wretches—yes, that *we*—might live through Him!

Thus I have described how He looked upon us, and at what time He came.

III. But now, thirdly—and, oh, that these lips had language, or that this heart could do without poor lips to tell this tale—WHAT DID HE DO FOR US? There we were; do not think that you are any better than the rest, or the worst, of our fallen race. If the current social habits, and the spread of Christian light make us outwardly better, we had only to have been put in the circumstances of those heathen—and we would soon have been as bad as they! The heart is corrupt in every case—and yet Jesus came! What did He do for us? Well, first, He made the fullest degree of sacrifice that was possible. To lift us up, He stooped. He made the heavens, and yet He lay in Bethlehem’s manger! He hung the stars in their places, and laid the beams of the universe, and yet He became a carpenter’s Son, giving up all His rank and dignity for love’s dear sake! And then when He grew up, He consented to be the Servant of servants, and made Himself of no reputation. He took the lowest place—“He was despised and rejected of men”—He gave up all ease and comfort, for He had not where to lay His head. He gave up all health of body, for He bore our sickness, and He bared His back to the smiters that the chastisement of our peace might fall

upon Him. He gave up the last rag He had, for they took His own clothes from Him, and upon His vesture did they cast lots. He gave up, for the world, all esteem.

They called Him a blasphemer. Reproach broke His heart, but He gave that heart up for us. He gave His body to the nails, and His heart to the spear—and He could do no more. When at last He gave his life, “It is finished,” He said. And they took down His mangled body from the tree, and laid it in the grave. Self-sacrifice had reached its climax! Further, He could not go, but He could not have saved us if He had stopped short of that. So lost, so utterly lost were we, that without this extreme self-devotion—till it could be said, “He saved others; Himself he could not save—without this self-devotion, I say, He could not have saved so much as one of us! In the fact that Christ’s self-sacrifice went so far I see evidence of the extreme degree of our need! It may be thought, perhaps, that I speak in excitement when I describe the lost estate of man. Sirs, I have felt that lost estate in my own soul, and I do but tell you what I know! And if you had ever felt it—and I pray God you may, if you never have—you would admit that it cannot be exaggerated! But look at this. I challenge any reasonable man to controvert the position. Would He who is “God over all, blessed forever,” have come from the height of heaven, given up all that is grand and honorable, have made Himself of no reputation, and have humbled Himself even to the death, to save us, if it had not been a most terrible ruin to which we were subject? Could there need such a mighty heave of the eternal shoulders if it had not been a dead lift, indeed? Here is something more than a Samson needed to pull up the gates, posts, and bars of our great dungeon—and carry all away upon His mighty shoulders so that we might never be prisoners again!

The splendid deed of grace which Christ has accomplished was not a triviality, it could not be, and therefore there must have been some dire and urgent ruin imminent upon the sons of men for Christ to make so tremendous a sacrifice as to bleed and die for us! And, mark, brothers and sisters, while this death of Christ was to Him the height of sacrifice, and while it proved the depth of our ruin, it was the surest way of our deliverance! Behold how man has broken the law! Can *you* help him? Can you help him, you pure spirits that stand around the throne of God? Can you help him? Can you come and encourage him, cheer him, give him hope that, perhaps, he may do better? Your encouragements are all in vain, for you encourage him to do what cannot be done! He is so ruined that the case is beyond your aid! But suppose God, Himself, should take account of it? Yes, now *there* is hope for him! But, what if God should show His pity, and give His counsel and that would not go far in helping him? Then were the hope but slender! But what if God will go as far as ever God can go—does that need correction? No, let it stand! I cannot speak more correctly than that. I know of nothing that God, the Eternal, Himself, could do more than to become incarnate, and in human flesh to bleed and die for man! God has here shown all the attributes and perfections of His Godhead! What can I say more? He has purposed and completed the utmost that infinite love can do for our infinite wretchedness! Well, if God will do so much that no more can be done, and God is infinite, then, depend upon it, that is the surest thing to be done! It claims admiration, and defies argument while it excites inquiry!

Do you ask how He will do it? Well, Christ shall take upon *Himself* the responsibility for this sin; He shall stand in the sinner’s place; He shall be punished as if *He* had committed the sin, though in Him was no sin! The vials of God’s wrath that were due to human transgression shall be poured upon *Him*! The sword of justice that ought to be sheathed in the sinner’s breast shall be plunged into the savior’s heart! Ah, was there ever such a plan devised? The Just dies for the unjust! The offended Judge, Himself, suffers for the offense against His own law! Oh, matchless plan! This, indeed, makes sure work for man—for now it takes him, sinful and lost as he is—and puts another in his place who is able to bear his sin, and puts man into the place of that other. Yes, hear it! It puts the sinner into the savior’s place—and God looks upon the savior as if He had been the sinner! And then upon the sinner as if *he* had been the perfect one! There is a transposition! Christ and the sinner change places! He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him! This is the way to do it. Yes, and this is the way to sweep out of the path all attempts on our part to help, for this was so great a work that Jesus Christ, Himself, must sweat while He did it! He must bleed His soul away to accomplish it! O you self-

righteous ones, stand back! With broken limbs and dislocated bones you come hobbling up to help this glorious champion; away with you! You are without strength, and you are ungodly by nature! What can *you* do in this great enterprise? Christ has done it, and every part of it is such a wondrous transaction that the very majesty thereof might make self-righteousness cover its face and fly away abashed, crying, “O God, I must lie down and die! I cannot live! I have seen the righteousness of Christ, and there is no more room for me!” Come, brothers and sisters, since my words fail to set out what the savior has done, I want you to think it over, and I want you to love Him!

For my part, I want to love and adore Him, too, with all my heart, soul, and strength, for dying for me, for standing in my place, that I, a lost, condemned, and all but *damned* sinner, might yet live and be justified, and be loved, and adopted, and accepted—and at last crowned with glory for His dear sake!

IV. Time fails me and, therefore, I must hurry to the last point, which is, what then? What then? “Christ died for the ungodly.” What then? Then sin cannot shut any man out from the grace of God if he believes! The man says, “I am without strength.” Christ died for us when we were without strength. The man says, “I am ungodly.” Christ died for the ungodly. I remember how Martin Luther hammers on that word, “He gave Himself for our sins.” “There,” says Martin, “it does not say He gave Himself for our *virtues*. He thinks better of our sins than our *virtues*,” he says. “He gave Himself for our sins.” He never says a word about our excellences—never a syllable about our goodness. Rotten trash! But He gave Himself for our *sins*!”

“Oh,” says a man, “I would come to Christ if I were cleaner.” Man, He did not die for the *clean*—He died for the *filthy*, that He might make them clean! “I would come to the great physician,” says one, “if I were whole.” Man, He never came to die for those that are *whole*! The physician does not come to cure those that are whole, but those that are *sick*. Look at it in this light. If you have committed every crime in the whole catalog of sin, no matter what that crime may be, if you will repent of it, and look to Christ, there is pardon for you! There is more; there is a new life for you—and a new heart for you; there is a new birth for you, so complete you shall be no more a child of Satan, but a child of God! And that is to be had *now*! Oh, the splendor of the grace of God! Our sins stand like some tremendous mountain, and the grace of God plucks that mountain right up by its roots, and hurls it into the sea! It shall never be seen again! Christ’s blood shall cover it! Christ shall be seen and not you; He will stand between you and God, and God will see *you* through the wounds of Christ if you believe in Him—and you shall be “accepted in the Beloved.” I have not put this too strongly, either. The text says, “When we were without strength He died for the ungodly,” and it is to the ungodly and those without strength that this message is sent. What more? Why, then, Jesus will never cast away a believer for his future sins—for if when we were without strength He died for us; if, when we were ungodly, He interposed on our behalf—will He leave us now that He has made us godly?

Did you notice the argument of the whole chapter as it was read to you just now? It is the strongest and most unassailable argument that I can deem possible. The apostle declares that, “God commands His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us: much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him; for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved through His life.” Notice the triple cord of reasoning employed here! When we were enemies, He blessed us. Much more, now that we are reconciled! When we were enemies, He reconciled us—will He not now *save* us? Shall those who are reconciled be afterwards left to perish? And since we are so freely and fully saved by the death of Christ, much more shall we be saved by His life! If His *death* did so much, much more must His *life* be a motive for our confidence! Oh, it is clear! It is clear! It is clear! Though I may have backslidden and may have sinned, yet I have only to go back to my Father, and say, “Father, I have sinned,” and I am still His child, and He will fall upon my neck and kiss me! And I shall yet sit at His table, and hear music and dancing, because He that was lost is found! It is clear, now, from the text!

Again, it is equally clear that every blessing any child of God can need, he can have. He that spared not His own Son, when we were without strength and ungodly, cannot deny us inferior blessings now

that we are His own dear children! Go, child of God, go with confidence to your heavenly Father! He gave you Jesus, what can He keep back from you? What then? Let us ask the question once more, and I think a spontaneous outflow of gratitude should furnish the reply. If, when we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly, let us praise Him! Let us praise Him! Let us praise Him! Oh, if He came when there was nothing to draw Him—when, if He looked us through and through, He could not see a good point in us—if He loved us so that He would save us when we were altogether bad, hopeless, and helpless, why, the very least thing we can ever do is to love Him and praise Him as long as we have any being! I am of that old woman's mind who said, "If Jesus Christ does save me, He shall never hear the end of it." We, too, will talk of it, and we will praise Him, and we will bless Him for it as long as immortality endures! "What, does Christ Jesus take the utterly unworthy?" Yes, just so! Then, when He takes them, how they will serve Him! Love Him? Love Him? Is there any question about it? When He has forgiven me everything freely, and saved me by the shedding of His own *blood*, can I not love Him? I would be worse than a devil if I did not love Him! Yes, while this heart can beat—while memory holds her throne, His name shall be dearest of all names, and His service the pleasure of my life, if He does but give me grace to stand to this!

Do you say the same, beloved? I am sure you do! And may He of His mercy touch the heart of some great sinner tonight! Perhaps there is a woman here that is a sinner. Oh, that you may come to wash His feet with your tears, and wipe them with the hairs of your head, because of His love to you! Perhaps there is some thief here; oh, that you might be with Him in paradise! And I am sure, if He pronounces you absolved, you will sing more sweetly in heaven than any other, because of what He has done for you! Blessed be Your name, O Son of God, forever and forever! And all our hearts say, "Amen!"

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 5.

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